



BANKSTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Submission

to

Infrastructure Australia

***National Land Freight Strategy – Discussion
Paper***

April 2011

Introduction

Bankstown City Council represents some 186,000 residents and is responsible for a Local Government Area (LGA) of 78 square kilometres located 20 kilometres south-west of the Sydney GPO. The LGA is criss-crossed by major transport routes and includes a number of significant local industrial zones.

Whereas Council supports the concept of the National Land Freight Strategy, this submission seeks to highlight some the major impacts of freight transport at the Local Government level.

Background

Bankstown City Council has always been supportive and encouraging of industry within its LGA. Council also understands the important role the local industrial road network plays within a National Land Freight Strategy in terms of the need for improved efficiency.

The Bankstown LGA road network consists of 600 kilometres of local and regional roads of which 34 kilometres are classified as industrial roads providing the "last mile access" to industry in the area. Council takes pride in maintaining a high standard road network however there are constraints that impact on Council's ability to properly fulfil its role within that strategy.

The maintaining of the Council road network to an appropriate standard is becoming increasingly difficult because of issues including (but not limited to):

- Increasing traffic volumes
- Higher axle loads
- Funding constraints (including rate pegging).
- Cost shifting by other arms of government
- Deteriorating and/or unsuitable infrastructure

Higher Mass Limits

The Strategy's major impact on Council is in terms of the road network being subjected to higher axle loads that we believe will accelerate damage to Council's industrial roads.

One of the principal assumptions on which the Strategy is based is that road friendly suspension (RFS) required of HML vehicles will manage the adverse impacts of additional axle loading on road pavements. Council believes that recent research suggests that this not the case in that the mechanism for damage to pavements and bridges from heavy vehicles is still not understood completely. The application of RFS does not appear to be achieving the pavement protection expected, especially for the thinner local government pavements.

The history of the adoption of RFS and HML both overseas and in Australia has generally been by blanket legislation to address the needs of the freight industry. It is Council's belief that there has been too much of a theoretical approach to analysing the impact of thin local road pavements and that in practice there will inevitably be a real additional cost burden to properly maintain local roads.

In view of this uncertainty Council has been reluctant to approve routes for HML vehicles on its local roads within the existing funding regimes.

Funding of Local Roads

Any number of studies and investigations over recent years has clearly indicated that insufficient funds have been allocated at, and by, all levels of government to properly maintain basic infrastructure such as roads.

Bankstown City Council, like all local government bodies, is responsible for the provision of a wide range of services to its local community. One of the primary responsibilities is the local road network but the limited funds available, predominantly because of the rate pegging requirements in this State, has resulted in inadequate funding for road maintenance and renewal. Consequently the standard of the Bankstown road network, like all local road networks, is in a state of continuing gradual decline.

Given appropriate funding arrangements Bankstown would be able to correct this situation and be able to play its part in improving the efficiency of the land freight system.

There is an implicit recognition that Local Government self-funding of roads is inadequate because of grants provided through State Government authorities, such as the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales (for regional roads), and from a federal level through the Roads to Recovery program.

These programs do not specifically address the impact of the National Freight Strategy but their expansion specifically to cover the needs of industrial roads is seen as providing for this missing aspect of the Strategy.

Supplementary funding is already required to meet recognised asset management objectives, and the situation will be exacerbated if the expected further deterioration of industrial roads results.

M5 Motorway Corridor

Local roads along the M5 corridor will be placed under more pressure when the expected freight traffic increases lead commuter traffic to choose local roads rather than the M5 Motorway. Existing and future challenges facing the M5 Corridor are:

1. Existing congestion, long delays, capacity use and slow vehicular movement at peak times.
2. Projected 200,000 additional dwellings by 2031.
3. Doubling of passenger and freight movement Sydney Airport by 2029.
4. Intensification of major industrial areas.
5. An additional 3.2M truck movements by 2020 from Port Botany expansion in 2012

With regard to point 5 above, the Port Botany Terminal 3 is on track to open in 2012, and will be fully operational in 2013. Container trade is expected to nearly

double (from 1.8 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) to over three million TEUs per year) by the early 2020s.

Although it is hoped that improvements to the rail network will increase mode share of freight to 40%, it is currently only about 20%. This leaves 80% of impending freight traffic to spill onto the road network, much of that destined for western and south western Sydney connectors like the M5. While work on the rail network has defined timelines, the same cannot be said for the expansion of the M5 Corridor.

The National Land Freight Strategy raises concern that there are "unrealistic expectations of how freight vehicles might be accommodated on already congested multiuse infrastructure". Council agrees with these concerns and stresses the importance of a properly timed and funded network for road and rail.

Council's firm belief in the necessity of firm timing and funding commitments for coordinated expansion of the entire M5 Motorway Corridor led it to establish a non-partisan Task Force to seek the best economic, transport, environmental and social outcomes for the M5 Motorway Corridor. Council and the Task Force also believe that a commitment to public transport strategies to complement port, rail and road strategies is essential. This will help to alleviate some of the environmental and social impacts of increased land freight movements.

Conclusion

Bankstown City Council supports the concept of a National Land Freight Strategy as being appropriate at a local level as well as providing greater efficiency nationally.

The concerns of a significant cost impact from heavy vehicles on local road pavements is one believed to be shared by many councils as being an unreasonable cost to councils.

Council can envisage the benefits of the National Land Freight Strategy being realised provided :-

1. Appropriate funding arrangements to address the needs of the important? infrastructure assets of local road networks
2. The various national and state strategies move forward in an integrated and timely manner which considers not only transport and economic drivers, but social and environmental impacts as well.